

# The intent of this cultural/religious overview of East Asia is to

**1. Provide a context,** a schema, a broad knowledge of the East Asian world. The audience is Asian I students, faculty who instruct these students, military personnel deploying to East Asia, and the Department of Defense community at large.

**2. Address content Final Learning Objectives (FLOs)** This work treats the basic, commonly understood themes of the following FLOs:

- a. Holidays/Observances
- b. Customs
- c. Religious Groups
- d. Ethnic/Racial Groups
- e. Gender Issues
- f. Conflicts

The goal is establishment of a “level playing field” where readers can possess competency in a common cultural literacy for East Asia. In addition, this project introduces entry level military intelligence personnel to critical elements of the East Asian intelligence picture.

Readers will grow in their understanding of...

## Unit 1. Cultural Awareness (h2cultur)

- Importance of sensitivity by military intelligence linguists to cultures of East Asia
- Cultural awareness advantages inherently possessed by military personnel

## Unit 2. Historical Overview (h3histor)

- Long-lasting effects of over 4,500 years of history within the East Asian region
- Close historical ties between Hindu, Buddhist and Chinese religious thought and practice
- Unique Muslim impact on Southeast Asia

## **Unit 3. Foundational Beliefs**

### **A. Hinduism (h4hindub)**

- Extreme duration of concept of time within Hindu thought
- Variety of Hindu paths leading to salvation

### **B. Buddhism (h5buddhb)**

- Major schools of Buddhist thought--Theravada and Mahayana (Pure Land, Zen and Tantra)
- Decentralized, diversified nature of Buddhist practice

### **C. Chinese Religions (h6chineb)**

- Pervading influence of Chinese folk religious practice
- Syncretistic nature of Chinese religious practice

### **D. Islam (h7islamb)**

- Presence of pre-Islamic expression within present-day Muslim faith and practice within Southeast Asia
- Common beliefs held by most Muslims

## **Unit 4. Gestures and Taboos (h8gestur)**

- Foundational principles to apply when interacting with a new culture
- Importance of manners and customs to cultural understanding

## **Unit 5. Holidays and Observances (h9holida)**

- Distinctive Chinese religions, Buddhist and Muslim religious/cultural holidays and observances
- Significance of holidays and observances for tactical, operational and strategic military missions

## **Unit 6. Religion and East Asian Politics (i1politi)**

- Long lasting influence of Confucian thought and practice on East Asian political expressions
- Unique Buddhist and Muslim influence in Southeast Asian politics

## **Unit 7. U.S. Relations--East Asian Cultures (i2usrela)**

- Principles of United States foreign policy within East Asia
- Importance and complexity of engaging China
- Role and growing impact of ASEAN in the region

## **Unit 8. Fundamentalisms (i3fundam)**

- Resurgence of religious expression throughout the East Asian world
- Impact of militant Muslim fundamentalist thought and practice in the region

## **Unit 9. Religious Texts--Societal Implications**

### **A. Hindu Texts (i4hindut)**

- Flexibility, four stages and goals of Hindu religious life
- Paths leading to liberation

### **B. Buddhist Texts (i5buddht)**

- Importance of compassion, meditation and achieving good merit within Buddhist practice
- Impact of the Sangha on Theravadan Buddhist expression

### **C. Chinese Texts (i6chinet)**

- Importance of community and family within Confucian ethics
- Taoist ideal of following the natural course of things (wu-wei)

## D. Islamic Texts (i7islamt)

- Ethical practices and views toward violence within Islamic thought
- Importance of internal motivation within Islam

## Unit 10. Gender Issues (i8gender)

- Unique East Asian Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, Taoist, Muslim and Christian perspectives concerning women
- Impact of prostitution on U.S. Armed Forces and East Asian cultures

## Unit 11. Resources (i9resour)

- Book, periodical, audio-visual, and electronic (World Wide Web) resources available for further study
- Necessity of discernment in dealing with the overwhelming amount of information available on East Asian cultures/religions

## Unit 12. Country Area Studies

- Volume II provides an overview of (a) China [j2china], (b) Mongolia [j3mongol], (c) Japan [j4japan], and (d) the Korean Peninsula [j5korea]. Volume III treats (e) Thailand [j7thaila], (f) Vietnam [j8vietna], (g) the Philippines [j9philip], (h) assorted Southeast Asian countries--Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos [k1myanma], (i) the Indonesian archipelago--Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, and Singapore [k2indone] and (j) Australia and New Zealand [k3austra].
- Distinctive religious practices within the region
- Country locations

- General and commonly understood treatment of the following Final Learning Objectives (FLOs) for each country:

1. Holidays/Observances
2. Customs
3. Religious Groups
4. Ethnic/Racial Groups
5. Gender Issues
6. Conflicts